

NewsRelease



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PILOT PROGRAM ENCOURAGES LEARNING

Student-built robots to battle for supremacy

Students from 10 Peninsula and Middle Peninsula middle schools will put their brains, engineering skills and computer knowledge to the test this weekend in a NASA-sponsored robotics challenge.

Teams from schools in Newport News, Hampton, Poquoson, Williamsburg-James City County and York and Gloucester counties have designed, built and programmed self-operating robots using popular Lego "Mindstorms" technology.

During Saturday's competition at the Virginia Air and Space Center in Hampton, those eight-inch tall robots will go head to head on a four by eight-foot plywood playing field.

To successfully complete their mission, the student-built machines have only two minutes to pick up "rock samples" while fending off the competition.

Four round-robin tournaments start at 10:15 a.m., February 13. Double elimination rounds are set for the afternoon starting at 1:30. The playing field will be in the gallery of the Virginia Air and Space Center (on the first floor near the Apollo XII capsule.)

The Peninsula Robotics Challenge is designed to help students advance math, science and engineering skills. Project organizers also hope the nine-week program will encourage middle school youngsters to pursue these areas in future studies. The challenge was developed by the Learning Technologies Project at the NASA Langley Research Center in Hampton and the New Horizons Regional Education Center.

Saturday's competition is the culmination of an entire lesson plan that integrated a variety of classroom subjects. It went beyond the construction of the robot to include written and oral presentations as well as a required mentorship involving local elementary school students.

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